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## Professional self-care practices, emotional work and burnout in Australian psychology academics

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# **Professional Self-Care Practices, Emotional Work and Burnout in Australian Psychology Academics**

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of

## **Bachelor of Arts (Psychology) Honours**

**Claudia Yael Hoenig**

School of Arts and Humanities

Edith Cowan University.

2020

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## Professional Self-Care Practices, Emotional Work and Burnout in Australian Psychology Academics

### Abstract

This study examined whether professional self-care practices (PSCP) had a moderating effect on the relationship between emotional work (EW) performed and burnout symptoms experienced among Australian academics teaching psychology. Seventy-seven Australian psychology academics ranging from 27 to 64 years, with an average of 13.34 years of academic experience, and representing the full range of academic levels from Associate Lecturer to Professor, and predominantly females, participated in the study. Participants completed an online survey comprising three questionnaires: the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), Intensive Emotion Work Inventory (IEW) and Professional Self-Care Scale (PSCS), addressing levels of PSCP, EW performed and frequency and intensity of experiencing burnout symptoms, respectively. A positive association was found between EW and burnout symptoms while PSCP was found to be negatively correlated with burnout symptoms. Two separate Hierarchical Multiple Regression (HMR) were performed investigating the relationship between PSCP, EW and the two dimensions of burnout, burnout frequency and burnout intensity, respectively. The predictor variables were entered in the first step of each analysis and the product of PSCP and EW scores were entered into the second step of each analysis to test the moderating effect. PSCP and EW together predicted 39.6 percent of variance in burnout frequency and 15.8 percent variance in burnout intensity scores. For both analyses, the interaction between PSCP and EW predicted a small independent percentage of variance (39.6% for burnout frequency and 15.8% for burnout intensity), providing evidence of the moderator effect. These findings suggest that PSCP acts as a protective barrier against the effects of emotional work performed and levels of burnout symptoms experienced among Australian psychology academics. Future recommendations include further study investigating whether the emotional work performed by psychology academics is similar across all the roles of the academic's professional profile and whether other demands or resources increase or reduce occupational burnout among psychology academics.

**Keywords:** *Professional Self-Care Practices; Emotional Work; Occupational Burnout; Job-Demand Resource Model; Psychology; Academics; Australia.*

Author: Claudia Yael Hoenig

Supervisor: Assoc/Prof Melissa Davis

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Claudia Y. Hoenig

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## Professional Self-Care Practices, Emotional Work and Burnout in Australian Psychology Academics

The impact of job demands and job resources and their contribution to occupational burnout has been extensively researched in samples within health sciences, education, and medical professions (Hakanen, Demerouti, Xanthopoulou & Bakker 2007; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter 2001; Miller, Grise-Owens & Shalash, 2018; Pisaniello, Winefield & Delfabbro 2012; Tuxford & Bradley 2015; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli 2007). The findings of these studies show that individuals exposed to stressful working conditions alongside limited professional resources are at risk of experiencing occupational burnout.

### **Occupational Burnout**

Burnout is a complex multifaceted construct that refers to a gradual process of experiencing emotional fatigue and weariness in response to ongoing unresolved occupational stressors (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Results of studies highlighted school educators as well as medical, human services and allied health practitioners are susceptible to experience occupational burnout (Aronsson et al., 2017; Leiter, 1993; Maslach et al., 2001; Sangganjanavanich & Balkin, 2013; Storm & Rothman, 2003; Tuxford & Bradley, 2015; Watts & Robertson, 2011). The relational component, a key feature in teaching and traditional helping professions, involves the professional's feelings and attitudes in client and student engagement, since considerable time is spent around clients' psychological, social or physical concerns (Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2014; Hulsheger & Schewe, 2011; Howard & Johnson, 2004; Pisaniello, Winefield & Delfabbro, 2012). Ongoing support to students and clients, sometimes at the sacrifice of the professional's emotional and psychological wellbeing, can weaken and impair this relational dynamic thereby placing the

professional at risk of experiencing occupational burnout (Maslach et al., 2001; Rehman, Qingren, Latif & Iqbal, 2017; Sangganjanavanich & Balkin, 2013;).

Maslach and Jackson (1981) assert that burnout is characterised by three dimensions namely, Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalisation and diminished Personal Accomplishment. The three dimensions are measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) measurement scale which is one of the most commonly used measures in occupational burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Lackritz, 2004; Rehman et al., 2017; Watts & Robertson, 2011). Emotional Exhaustion refers to feelings of emotional depletion and fatigue by one's occupation (Lackritz, 2004; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Providing professional care and support can be emotionally demanding and exhausting especially when feeling overworked (Ghorpade, Lackritz & Singh, 2007; Maslach et al., 2001). Experiencing emotional fatigue within the workplace can produce a snowball effect affecting the individual's emotional and cognitive functioning which may result in impaired productivity or engagement with clients and students (Bakker et al., 2014; Maslach et al., 2001; Rehman et al., 2017). In addition, this may negatively impact the professional's work-life balance and interpersonal relationships (Visotskaya, Cherkashina, Katcin & Lisina, 2015).

The second dimension of burnout, Depersonalisation, describes the professional's feelings of disconnection towards students and clients' care or service being provided (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). This disconnection can lead the student and client to being dehumanised and may be shown by the professional's detached demeanour, formal and impersonal communication style (Sangganjanavanich & Balkin, 2013; Visotskaya et al., 2015). Establishing emotional distance is a perceived coping mechanism as the professional attempts to manage the emotional stressors of his or her occupation (Khan, Rasli, Yusoff & Ahmad, 2015; Maslach et al., 2001). The combination of increased levels of emotional disengagement and lack of compassion may lead to professionals responding negatively and

insensitively to their clients and students (Khan et al., 2015; Watts & Robertson, 2011; Tuxford & Bradley, 2015).

The third dimension of burnout, Personal Accomplishment, describes attitudes and feelings of competence and the level of sense of achievement experienced when working with others (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Maslach and Jackson (1981) found that lower scores observed in this subscale correlated to increased levels of burnout experienced. Additionally, they stated although Personal Accomplishment is separate from Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalisation, it can still contribute to Emotional Exhaustion or Depersonalisation (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 2001). Therefore, feeling burdened by work demands, lack of resources or low levels of job satisfaction may negatively impact an individual's sense of self-efficacy within the workplace (Lim et al., 2010; Maslach et al., 2001; Sangganjanavanich & Balkin, 2013; Watts & Robertson, 2011).

Aronsson et al.'s (2017) systematic review revealed that structural factors within the working environment, such as; low job control, high work demands and work overload, low remuneration and lack of professional and social support increased the risk of workers experiencing occupational burnout. The researchers further asserted that when these work-related factors continue it will eventually become a societal problem, therefore there is a strong need for improved working environments to reduce the risk of occupational burnout. The authors further comment that if occupational stress is chronic, it may result in escalated societal issues (Aronsson et al., 2017). Therefore, a clear rationale exists for research on how working environments can help reduce the risk of potential occupational burnout.

Burnout in academics has received more attention in recent years with researchers finding that prolonged periods of time spent working with students can be emotionally exhausting and be a potential risk for occupational burnout (Barkhuizen & Rothman, 2008; Hulsheger & Schewe, 2011; Rehman et al., 2017). The risk of occupational burnout is further

amplified as academics experience increased emotional stress when expected to manage and cope with high student turnover and evaluations in a short period of time, meet students' academic needs, and fulfil organisational requirements (Dollard & Bakker, 2010; Sangganjanavanich & Balkin, 2013). Visotskaya et al's (2015) study's results indicated academics in the health and social sciences experienced higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion compared to their engineering colleagues. The authors comment the differences in results observed between the two faculties may be attributed to their distinct professional natures such as, expected level of student engagement, teaching modality related to subject content and the way emotions are managed by academics in the two faculties. Visotskaya et al (2015) further posit that the higher levels of emotional fatigue reported among health and science academics may be attributed to the teaching demands they experience, as intense levels of student-academic engagement and interaction is a significant component and requirement of their profession. Additionally, the authors found that health and social science academics tended to emotionally disconnect with their students and show loss of interest in their professional work when feeling emotionally overwhelmed by work demands compared with engineering academics who coped with emotional stressors by compartmentalising emotional energy in other areas not limited to their profession (Visotskaya et al., 2015). By doing so, engineering academics reported lower levels of emotional fatigue and job dissatisfaction (Visotskaya et al., 2015). The small sample size (22 participants) distributed across two faculties is a limitation of this study. A sample representative of the university's diverse academic population may have yielded a larger sample size, providing more variance and may have produced statistically significant results in the area of occupational burnout experienced by academics.

Research on occupational burnout within the education sector shows that this syndrome is becoming pervasive with more school educators' reporting feeling overwhelmed

and challenged by the emotional stressors associated with their professions (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Schonfeld, 2001; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008; Tuxford & Bradley, 2015). Researchers comment the experience of burnout amongst university academics is comparable to burnout in other professions (Barkhuizen & Rothman, 2008; Bell, Rajendran & Theiler, 2012; Watts & Robertson, 2011). Globally, educators and academics alike must manage increasing workloads while meeting professional demands (Barkhuizen & Rothman, 2008; Devonport, Biscomb & Lane, 2008; Howard & Johnson, 2004; Kinman, 2001; Miller, Grise-Owens & Shalash, 2018; Watts & Robertson, 2011). The modern academic's diverse professional profile which includes managing student-academic relationships, peer engagement and collaboration as well fulfil institutional responsibilities, places enormous stress on the academic thereby increasing the risk of experiencing occupational burnout (Lunsford, Baker, Griffin, & Johnson, 2013; Watts & Roberson, 2011). Occupational stress experienced by university academics not only affects their own professional and personal wellbeing but can also negatively impact students' learning experiences (Bell et al., 2012; Lomas, 2007; Winefield et al., 2003). Watts and Robertson (2011) demonstrated that an inability to manage these various professional roles efficiently may be due to insufficient psychological, physiological or organisational resources or support to help meet the academic's job demands.

### **Job Demand - Resources Model**

Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) model stipulates that all occupations have different job-related risk factors contributing to occupational stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2014; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007 ). The JD-R model encompasses two processes, namely; job demands which are associated with risk factors and correlated with emotional exhaustion and occupational disengagement whereas, job resources are motivational in nature and have the capacity to positively impact health and occupational

outcomes (Bakker et al., 2014; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Though job demands and job resources produce different outcomes, their interaction is important in predicting occupational wellbeing as job resources can act as a buffer on job demands (Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Hakanen et al., 2007). Researchers assert due to its user-friendly framework, the JD-R model can be applied to a diverse range of occupations to predict occupational burnout (Bakker et al., 2014; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

Job demands are defined as aspects of an occupation that requires psychological and/or physiological effort and are associated with physical and/or psychological costs (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2009). While job demands may not be considered as negative, these demands can turn from eustress to distress when they are not met and require significant ongoing physiological or psychological effort (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). This can result in individuals experiencing negative health outcomes such as anxiety, depression and burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Factors such as stressful student interactions, workplace conflict, and emotional fatigue might all contribute to occupational burnout (Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009).

Job resources refer to anything physiological and/or psychological that has the potential to reduce job demands and support personal or professional wellbeing (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2014). It may be present at an organisational or interpersonal level which includes clear job descriptions, outlining tasks, autonomy, decision making input and feedback from management (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Hakanen et al., 2007). The motivational function of job resources serves to positively influence work engagement, reduce levels of cynicism, increase levels of personal accomplishment thereby improving job satisfaction (Aronsson et al., 2017; Bilge, 2006; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Demerouti et al.,

2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Furthermore, Demerouti and Bakker (2011) note workers who take ownership and proactively generate their own resources by modifying their work landscape either physically or cognitively whilst at the same time meeting organisational demands are better able to manage occupational stressors.

A review of the literature has highlighted that risk factors such as; limited time constraints, job pressures, work overload, unclear or ambiguous job descriptions and lack of available resources to be efficient and maintain productivity, all contribute to individuals experiencing occupational burnout (Rothman Barkhuizen & Tytherleigh, 2008; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The literature has shown these factors impacting burnout in higher education professionals' manifests in numerous ways such as absenteeism, high staff turnover, a diminished sense of perceived self-efficacy and competence, physiological and psychological impairment (Barkhuizen & Rothman, 2008; Bilge, 2006; Borritz et al., 2006; Kinman & Jones, 2007). This risk is further amplified as more students entering higher education require initial support from their lecturers and tutors to bridge the gap between high school and university studies (Rothman et al., 2008; Watts & Robertson, 2011). Rothman et al. (2008) comment the changing student profile to include distance education students, part-time students, students with language barriers, students from disadvantaged backgrounds or those at postgraduate level require the academic to invest more energy and time into meeting students' needs and demands. These are factors that contribute to the increased occupational stress of the modern day academic (Rothman et al., 2008; Kinman, 2014; Lomas, 2007).

### **Demographic Influence**

Researchers found demographic variables such as gender, age, position held, and tenure are factors that may contribute to occupational burnout among school educators and academics, respectively (Aronsson et al 2017; Khan, Rasli, Yusoff & Ahmad, 2015; Lackritz,

2004; Barkhuizen & Rothman, 2008). Maslach and Jackson (1981) reported gender differences on all three dimensions of burnout, however other researchers have found different results (Lackritz, 2004; Naring, Vlerick & Van de Ven, 2012; Watts & Robertson, 2011). The differences reported are inconsistent, with some studies indicating no significant gender differences in burnout dimensions among school educators and academics (Purvanova & Muros, 2010; Watts & Robertson, 2011). For instance, Lackritz's (2004) findings revealed female academics at American universities scored higher than males in the burnout dimension Emotional Exhaustion whereas, Bibou-Nakou, Stogiannidou and Kiosseoglou (1999) reported higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion among European male secondary school educators compared to their female counterparts and Jacobson, Pousette and Thylefors (2001) reported no significant gender differences in burnout among Swedish primary and secondary school educators. Researchers further explain that these inconsistencies observed in the dimensions of burnout may be due to differences in student demographic and profile as well the different ways in which school teachers and academics, respectively, may engage and interact with their students (Lackritz, 2004; Barkhuizen & Rothman, 2008; Naring et al., 2012).

Despite inconsistent findings on gender differences and burnout, numerous studies demonstrate that women reportedly record higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion scores whereas men reportedly record higher scores in Depersonalisation in their experience of burnout symptoms (Bibou-Nakou et al., 1999; Bilge, 2006; Lackritz, 2004; Watts & Robertson, 2011). Lackritz (2004) further asserts lower scores recorded in Depersonalisation among females might be attributed to the generalised perception of women being sensitive, empathetic and less likely to emotionally disconnect when engaging on an interpersonal level. Watts and Robertson's (2011) systematic review on occupational burnout in university academics revealed more women were susceptible to burnout compared to men, postulating it



may be a result of early stereotypical gender socialisation where women are considered and expected to be more compassionate and agreeable, while managing multiple roles such as professional and family commitments. Watts and Robertson (2011) further highlight that women's high scores in Emotional Exhaustion and men's high scores in Depersonalisation could also be attributed to women emotionally carrying the burden of occupational stressors compared to men, who more likely emotionally disconnect when feeling overwhelmed. Moreover, Khan et al. (2015) and Lackritz (2004) suggest that stereotypical gender socialisation produced generalised reactions unique to each gender when responding to stressful interpersonal interactions. Researchers acknowledge gender differences are evident in a large body of occupational burnout studies, however, agree these findings be interpreted with caution (Purvanova & Muros, 2010; Khan et al., 2015; Lackritz, 2004; Watts & Robertson, 2011). They argue the inconsistencies in research findings may be the result of previous studies' samples comprising of a high number of female academics, in addition, researchers also being heavily focussed on the burnout dimension Emotional Exhaustion, which may explain why the data are skewed (Aronsson et al., 2017; Bilge, 2006; Lackritz, 2004; Watts & Robertson, 2011). This was particularly evident in psychology faculties, where it is predominated by females (Watts & Robertson, 2011; Lackritz, 2004). Purvanova and Muros (2010) further state that findings as a result of skewed data and making Emotional Exhaustion synonymous with burnout, may lead to over-generalising women as more prone to burnout based on high Emotional Exhaustion scores, and diminish the experiences of men who scored high in Depersonalisation, another dimension of burnout.

Age and length of service has also been found to be associated with burnout (Khan, et al., 2015; Lim et al., 2010). The literature suggests academics who are younger and earlier in their careers are more at risk of experiencing occupational burnout compared to their older counterparts (Barkhuizen & Rothman, 2008; Kinman, 2001; Khan et al., 2015; Maslach et al.,

2001). Younger academics often must learn and adapt to structures of their new organisation, meet the performance expectations of their faculty as well as navigate conflicting time and role demands (Khan et al., 2015; Winefield et al., 2003). Khan et al.'s (2015) findings demonstrate that Pakistani academics younger than 40 years of age, with less than 10 years' experience and lower academic ranking reported higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion relative to older academics with more than 10 years' experience. This is consistent with Barkhuizen and Rothman's (2008) finding that academics are most likely to experience occupational burnout early on in their careers. They further comment that older and more experienced academics employ more effective coping strategies to deal with occupational stressors than do their younger colleagues (Barkhuizen & Rothman, 2008). This may be attributed to coping mechanisms and styles changing and evolving during a professional's lifetime as a result of experienced stressors and developmental trajectories (Diehl & Hay, 2010; Seiffge-Krenke, 2004). This is further supported by Petersen's (2011) study exploring why Australian university academics leave academia early in their careers. Peterson's (2011) findings revealed younger academics reported factors such as overwhelming workloads, time constraints, reduced job satisfaction as well as struggling to develop effective coping strategies to maintain the positive work engagement and passion they experienced upon entering academia, all contributed to early career exits by Australian academics. Researchers further highlighted academics in long term academic roles were the ones who managed to develop effective coping strategies over time in order to navigate and deal with the occupational stressors of academia, which has positively influence their productivity and overall job satisfaction (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Petersen, 2011).

### **Emotional Work**

Studies indicate professionals within education, health sciences and medicine report significant levels of stress and this may be due to an additional component referred to as

emotional work (Bilge, 2006; Naring et al., 2012; Pisaniello et al., 2012; Tuxford & Bradley, 2015). Emotional work, an example of job demands, is described as emotional behaviours and responses that are required to engage with others on an interpersonal level (Naring et al., 2012; Pisaniello et al., 2012; Strazdin, 2000). Emotional work encompasses helping and supporting others as well as strengthening interpersonal relationships (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Hulsheger & Schewe, 2011). Naring et al.'s (2012) findings revealed Dutch schoolteachers reported high levels of emotional work and perceived it to be part of their roles as they have a duty of care to their students' educational, emotional and physical wellbeing. Emotional work is considered a significant part of teaching however, it is often over-looked or deemed unimportant (Feuerhahn, Bellingrath & Kudeika, 2013; Hulsheger & Schewe, 2011). Tuxford and Bradley (2015) conducted a study comprising of 556 school educators, investigating whether a relationship exist between burnout dimension Emotional Exhaustion and emotional work. Tuxford and Bradley's (2015) findings demonstrated a positive correlation between participants' Emotional Exhaustion and emotional work as school educators. They concluded that emotional work such as helping and supporting students was directly proportional to burnout experienced by school educators (Tuxford & Bradley, 2015). These findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating the impact of emotional work in client and student-centred occupations and its contribution to the development of occupational burnout (Naring et al., 2012; Feuerhahn et al., 2013; Hulsheger & Schewe, 2011; Naring et al., 2012).

### **Professional Self-Care Practices**

Self-care practices, an example of job resources, is a multifaceted construct considered to be beneficial in promoting personal and professional general wellbeing (Barnett, Baker, Elman & Schoener, 2007; Dorociak, Rupert, Bryant & Zahniser 2017; Lee & Miller, 2013; Myers et al., 2012). Healthcare and education professionals are expected to

manage the emotional stressors of their occupations whilst simultaneously meeting the needs of their clients and students. Lee and Miller (2013) described self-care as behaviours that support and enhance an individual's overall wellbeing. Practising self-care may serve as an effective mechanism for professionals to foster emotional resilience as well as take control of their overall emotional and health wellbeing and prevent occupational burnout (Lee & Miller, 2013; Myers et al., 2012). The literature shows self-care practices such as adequate sleep, social and peer support and strategies building emotional resilience and creating self-awareness all contribute positively to an individual's overall health and wellbeing (Dorociak et al., 2017; Myers et al., 2012).

Bell et al. (2012) found that high work demands, lack of professional resources and self-care practices amongst Australian university academics were associated with occupational burnout. Bell et al. (2012) further comment that in order to reduce the potential risk of occupational burnout both the organisation and the professional have the responsibility to reduce perceived occupational stressors. Implementing and facilitating effective interventions and programs to reduce job-related stress and promote work-life balance, in addition to adequate supervisory support, will encourage professional self-care practices and foster emotional resilience amongst employees (Bell et al., 2012).

Although predominantly focussed on human services professionals, limited research exists on self-care practices in academics, in particular within psychology faculties in tertiary education (Lee & Miller, 2013). Miller et al.'s (2018) findings revealed that social work academics who engaged in self-care practices were better able to manage job-related stress, effectively support their students and were at a lower risk of experiencing occupational burnout. Miller et al. (2018) also reported that levels of self-care practices varied among academics with higher levels observed among higher ranking academics and those with longer years of academic service within the faculty. The authors further highlighted the need

of professional socialisation emphasising its importance and introduction early on in the academic's career to reduce or prevent academic isolationism and occupational burnout among this population (Miller et al., 2018).

### **Professional Self-Care Practices, Emotional Work, and Occupational Burnout**

Research exists on occupational burnout in university academics, however, no known research has investigated emotional work, or the potential moderating role of professional self-care practices, or focussed on psychology academics. Previous findings have highlighted the significant moderating role of professional self-care practices among practicing psychologists and its negative effect on occupational burnout, in addition, postulating its applicability in similar professions (Dorociak et al., 2017). Although distinctive differences exist between practicing psychologists and psychology academics professionally, both professionals engage with their clients and students, respectively on an interpersonal level. Ongoing interpersonal engagement requires significant emotional work, placing these professionals at risk of experiencing occupational burnout. Therefore, examining professional self-care practices of psychology academics and its impact on the experience of burnout provides support for further study among this population. The aim of the current study was to investigate whether professional self-care practises moderate the relationship between emotional work and symptoms of burnout within the framework of the JD-R model. The study will add to the existing body of literature as it will be the first to investigate the professional self-care practices of Australian psychology university academics, gaining an understanding on whether professional self-care can predict occupational burnout among this cohort. It was hypothesised that:

1. Job demands (emotional work) will be positively correlated with occupational burnout.
2. Job resources (professional self-care practices) will be negatively correlated with occupational burnout.

3. After controlling for demographic variables (age, gender, length of academic service), professional self-care practices will moderate the association between emotional work and occupational burnout.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

A correlational design was used in this study. The independent variables (predictor variables) are emotional work and professional self-practices, and the dependent variable (outcome variable) is burnout.

### **Participants**

Gpower 3.1 statistical calculator determined a sample size of 74 participants was required for a hierarchical multiple regression analysis with three predictor variables with an adjusted alpha level of 0.05 in order to find a medium size effect ( $f^2 = .15$ ) (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007).

A total of 84 participants returned the online surveys. Due to the use of snowball sampling, it was not possible to estimate the response rate. Seven participants were removed from the data set due to large amount of missing data resulting in a total of 77 participants. A further 12 participants omitted their age and 1 participant omitted gender, however, these participants were retained in the data set.

The final sample consisted of 17 males, 59 females and 1 gender unspecified. Participants ranged in age from 27 to 64 ( $M = 44.80$ ,  $SD = 9.00$ ). Participants had been employed in an academic position between one year and thirty-five years ( $M = 13.34$ ,  $SD = 9.01$ ). Eighty two percent of the sample was employed fulltime and 17.95% was employed part-time. Participants represented the full range of academic levels of Associate Lecturer level (6.41%), Lecturer (24.36%), Senior Lecturer (35.90%), Associate Professor (19.23%) and Professor (14.10%). Forty one percent of participants reported teaching primarily

undergraduate programs, 38.6% reported teaching primarily postgraduate programs and 20.51% reported equal teaching across undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

## **Materials**

An online survey was constructed containing a six-item demographic questionnaire (Appendix A) and scales measuring burnout, emotional work and professional self-care practices.

**Burnout** was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which is a 22-item self-report measure consisting of 3 subscales: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalisation and Personal Accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The subscale Emotional Exhaustion contains nine items measuring work-related emotional fatigue (e.g. I feel emotionally drained from my work). The Depersonalisation subscale contains five items assessing negative feelings related to emotional isolation from others (e.g. I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally). The Personal Accomplishment subscale contains eight items assessing perceived achievement of work-related experiences (e.g. I deal very easily with the problems of my students). Participants were asked to rate the frequency of certain work-related thoughts or feelings on a 0 (*never*) to 6 (*always*) rating scale. For those items where frequency was rated 1-6, participants rated the level of intensity experienced on a scale from 1 (*very mild*) to 7 (*very strong, major*) (Appendix B). Two separate scores, one for burnout frequency and one for burnout intensity were calculated for each subscale. Possible scores ranged from 0 to 132 for burnout frequency and 0 to 154 for burnout intensity. Higher scores indicated higher levels of burnout symptoms. The MBI scale has good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha coefficients .83 for burnout frequency and .84 for burnout intensity (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the current sample is .82 for burnout frequency and .82 for burnout intensity. Demerouti et al. (2001) assert that the MBI has been shown to be reliable in measuring occupational burnout.

Researchers state the MBI is a valid instrument to measure occupational burnout in education, academia and other health professions (Bilge, 2006; Demerouti et al., 2001, Ghorpade et al., 2007; Sangganjanavanich & Balkin, 2013).

***Emotional Work*** was measured using a version of the Intensive Emotion Work Inventory - IEW (Strazdins, 2000). The 22-item scale assessed a range of emotional behaviours involved in an individual's work. Participants were asked to respond to each item in terms of their relationship with their students. This scale is designed to capture emotional behaviours which includes helping (e.g., How often have you listened attentively to their worries), regulation (e.g. How often have you discussed social rules and guidelines with your students) and companionship (e.g., How often have you enquired about the thoughts, feelings or wellbeing of your students). Participants were asked to indicate whether emotional behaviours were evident in interactions with their students within their professional capacity over the past month from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*frequently*) with higher scores indicating a greater frequency of all emotional work-related behaviours (Appendix C). The IEW scale demonstrates a high internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha coefficient .91 (Strazdins, 2000). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the current sample was .89. The IEW scale has been shown to reliably capture emotional behaviours related to emotional work and validated by researchers who conducted studies on emotional work performed within education and human services (Pisaniello et al., 2012; Strazdin, 2000; Tuxford & Bradley, 2015).

***Professional Self-Care Practices*** were measured using Dorociak et al.'s (2017) Professional Self-Care Scale (PSCS) which is a 21- item measure comprising five subscales designed to measure self-care practices among professionals within the field of psychology and other professions similar in nature. The subscales and an example of an item are as follow: Professional Support (I avoid workplace isolation); Professional Development (I find ways to stay current in professional knowledge); *Life Balance* (I spend time with family or friends);



Cognitive Strategies (I monitor my feelings and reactions to students) and Daily Balance (I take some time for relaxation each day). Participants were asked to indicate the frequency of engagement in each self-care behaviour on a 1 (*never*) to 7 (*almost always*) rating scale (Appendix D). The higher the score, the more frequently the participant engages in self-care practices. The measure produces a score for each subscale as well as the total score.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales ranged from .70 to .83 demonstrating adequate internal consistency (Dorociak et al., 2017). Cronbach alpha's coefficient for total score in current sample was .90. The PSCP scale has been shown to be a valid instrument as it reflects the professional's behaviours or strategies that are being used to promote overall professional and personal wellbeing (Dorociak et al., 2017).

## **Procedure**

Ethical approval to conduct the study was granted by Edith Cowan Human Research Ethics Committee. Academics working in schools or departments of psychology in Australian universities were invited via email to take part in the study. Initial invitations were distributed to contacts of the research supervisor, and these people were invited to forward invitations to other colleagues. The email contained a weblink which directed participants to the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix E) hosted on Qualtrics. Participants indicated their consent to participate by ticking a check box and then were directed to the survey questions (Appendix F). At the end of the survey participants could opt to exit the survey or click on a link to enter their email addresses to be included in the gift voucher prize draw. The gift voucher prize draw form was accessed via a separate weblink to ensure that participants' email addresses were not connected to their responses to ensure anonymity. Data were collected over a five-week period. In the Participant Information Sheet, participants were provided with links and contact numbers to access support services if they so required.

## **Results**

## Data Analysis

The Statistical Software Programme SPSS version 25.0 was used to perform the statistical data analyses of this study.

## Assumption Testing

The assumption of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity were tested and supported before calculating Pearson's  $r$ . Normal Q-Q plots for each variable were visually inspected and ascertained to be normally distributed. Additionally, the visual inspection of scatterplot and stem-and-leaf plots of emotion work (EW) and self-care (PSCP) scores against burnout frequency (BF) and burnout intensity (BI) scores confirmed a linear and heteroscedastic relationship between these variables (see Appendix G).

## Correlational Analyses

Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) were calculated to investigate the relationships between emotional work (EW), professional self-care practices (PSCP) and both burnout frequency (BF) and burnout intensity (BI).

The bivariate correlations between EW and BF and BI, respectively were positive and moderate. The negative correlation between PSCP and BF indicated participants with higher PSCP scores also recorded lower scores in burnout frequency. A non-significant correlation was observed between PSCP and BI. The different correlations in burnout frequency and burnout intensity are consistent with Maslach and Jackson's (1981) findings of a moderate association between the frequency of experiencing burnout symptoms and the intensity of symptoms.

An additional bivariate correlation was performed to include demographic, predictor and outcome variables. Non-significant correlations were observed between demographic variables (age, gender, years of academic service and academic level), EW, PSCP, BF and BI Scores. See Table 1 for summary of results.

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics, Inter-correlations between Demographic, Predictor and Outcome Variables*

Variable	Age	Gender	AL	YE	PSCP	EW	BF	BI	Mean	SD
Age	1								44.94	8.98
Gender	-.06	1								
AL	.54**	.01	1						3.06	1.07
YE	.59**	.01	.72**	1					13.29	8.64
PSCP	-.03	.09	.11	-.04	1				99.52	16.11
EW	-.12	.05	.12	-.08	.26**	1			55.29	10.69
BF	-.16	.06	-.16	-.15	-.28**	.42**	1		64.91	19.97
BI	-.19	.06	-.06	-.04	-.05	.30*	.47**	1	72.83	31.68

Note: AL = Academic Level; YE = Years Employed.

\*\* Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### **Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis**

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis (HMR) was used to investigate EW and PSCP as predictors of burnout frequency and burnout intensity. Given the non-significant correlations between age, gender, years of academic service, academic level and the burnout variables, these demographic variables were not included in the analysis.

Before interpreting MRA results, assumption testing and checks were performed and met. Multivariate outliers were not a concern, with Mahalanobis distance not exceeding the critical  $\chi^2$  for  $df = 2$  (at  $\alpha = .001$ ) of 13.82 for any cases in the data set. Moderately high tolerances for all predictors in the MRA model indicated that multicollinearity would not affect interpretation of the MRA outcome.

I performed two hierarchical multiple regression (HMR) analyses to investigate the relationship between the predictor variables, PSCP and EW and the two dimensions of outcome variable burnout, BF and BI, respectively. In each analysis, predictor variables were entered in the first step. The product of PSCP and EW scores, also known as the interaction term, was entered into second step of each analysis to test the moderation effect on BF and BI respectively (Hypothesis 3) (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

#### **Burnout Frequency**

In the first step of HMR analysis predicting BF, PSCP and EW scores accounted for 33.9% of the variance,  $\Delta R^2 = .34$ ,  $F(2, 74) = 19.00$ ,  $p < .001$ . On step 2, the interaction term explained an additional of 5.7% in BF. In combination the predictors accounted for a total of 39.6% in BF scores,  $\Delta R^2 = .40$ ,  $\Delta F(3, 73) = 15.95$ ,  $p < .05$ . As shown in Table 2, PSCP significantly moderated the relationship between EW and BF. The effect size ( $f^2 = .65$ ) is "large" (Salkind, 2010). Regression coefficients, unstandardized ( $B$ ), standardised ( $\beta$ ) and squared semi-partial correlations ( $sr^2$ ) for each predictor variable on each step of the HMR Burnout Frequency (BF) are reported in Table 2.

Table 2

*Regression coefficients, unstandardised ( $B$ ), Standardised ( $\beta$ ) and Squared Semi-Partial Correlations ( $sr^2$ ) for Each Predictor Variable on Each Step of HMR Predicting BF ( $N = 77$ )*

Variable	$B$ [95%CI]	$\beta$	$sr^2$
Step 1			
Professional Self-Care Practices	-.53 [-.78, -.28]**	-.42	-.20
Emotional Work	.98 [.62, 1.34]**	.53	.28
Step 2			
Professional Self-Care Practices	-2.22 [-3.53, -.91]	-1.75	-.13
Emotional Work	-2.09 [-4.46, .27]*	-1.13	-.04
Interaction, Professional Self-Care Practices and Emotional Work	.03 [.01, .05]*	2.39	.08

Note: CI = Confidence Interval; \*\*  $p < .001$ , \*  $p < .05$ .

An interaction plot was created using statistical software program Interaction to illustrate PSCP's moderating effect on the relationship between EW and BF (Soper, 2006). After entering PSCP, EW and BF scores, it was computed by the statistical software and an interaction plot graph with values was produced (Figure 1). The participants with professional self-care practice scores above the mean and who also reportedly recorded significantly lower burnout frequency scores compared to those at the lowest level of emotional work are illustrated by the lowest line on the graph. The lines of the graph start to

converge as emotional work scores increased, as can be seen on top right side of graph.

Participants with higher professional self-care practice scores also reportedly recorded lower burnout frequency scores at high levels of emotional work. See Figure 1.

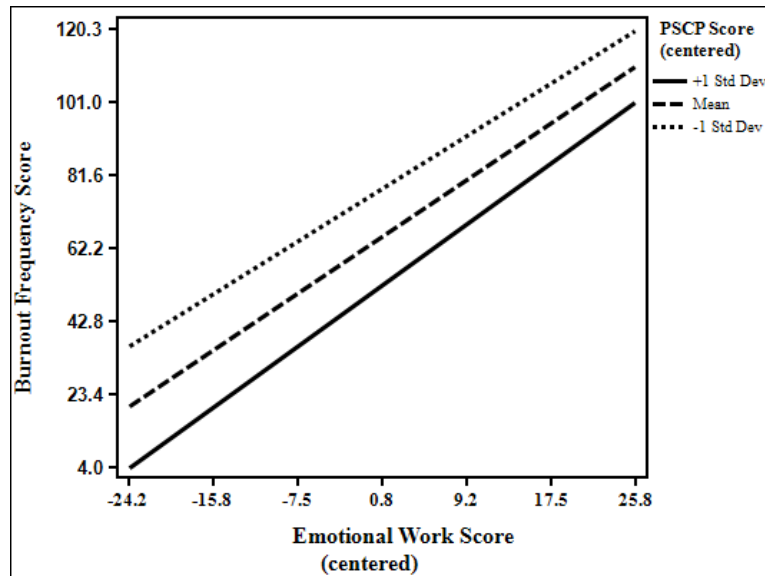


Figure 1. The Moderating Effect of Professional Self-Care Practices (PSCP) on Relationship between Emotional Work and Burnout Frequency

### Burnout Intensity

A second HMR analysis was performed to predict burnout intensity from EW, PSCP and the interaction. In the first step, PSCP and EW scores were entered and accounted for 10.9% of the variance in BI,  $\Delta R^2 = .08$ ,  $F(2, 74) = 4.54$ ,  $p < .05$ . On step 2, the interaction term explained an additional 6.6%. The three variables explained a total of 15.8% of variance in BI,  $\Delta R^2 = .12$ ,  $\Delta F(3, 73) = 4.55$ ,  $p < .05$ . The effect size for the second regression ( $f^2 = .19$ ) can be considered “small” for BI (Salkind, 2010). Regression coefficients, unstandardized ( $B$ ), standardised ( $\beta$ ) and squared semi-partial correlations ( $sr^2$ ) for each predictor variable on each step of the HMR Burnout Intensity (BI) are reported in Table 3.

Table 3

*Regression coefficients, unstandardised (B), Standardised ( $\beta$ ) and Squared Semi-Partial Correlations ( $sr^2$ ) for Each Predictor Variable on Each Step of HMR Predicting BI (N=77)*

Variable	B [95%CI]	$\beta$	$sr^2$
Step 1			
Professional Self-Care Practices	-.28 [-.75, .19]	-.13	-.02
Emotional Work	1.04 [.34, 1.73]*	.34	.11
Step 2			
Professional-Self Care Practices	-2.86 [-5.42, -.30]*	-1.75	-1.37
Emotional Work	-3.64 [-8.26, .97]	-1.19	-.03
Interaction, Professional Self-Care Practices and Emotional Work	.03 [.01, .05]*	2.21	.05

Note: CI = Confidence Interval.

\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*  $p < .05$ .

An interaction plot was created using statistical software program Interaction to illustrate PSCP's moderating effect on the relationship between EW and BI (Soper, 2006). After entering PSCP, EW and BI scores, it was computed by the statistical software and an interaction plot graph with values was produced (Figure 2). The moderating effect of professional self-care practices were more evident and showed participants at the lowest level of emotional work with average professional self-care practices, reportedly recorded significantly lower burnout intensity scores. There were no differences reported in burnout intensity scores at the highest levels of emotional work performed among the participants who reportedly practiced professional self-care at below average, average or above average levels. See Figure 2.

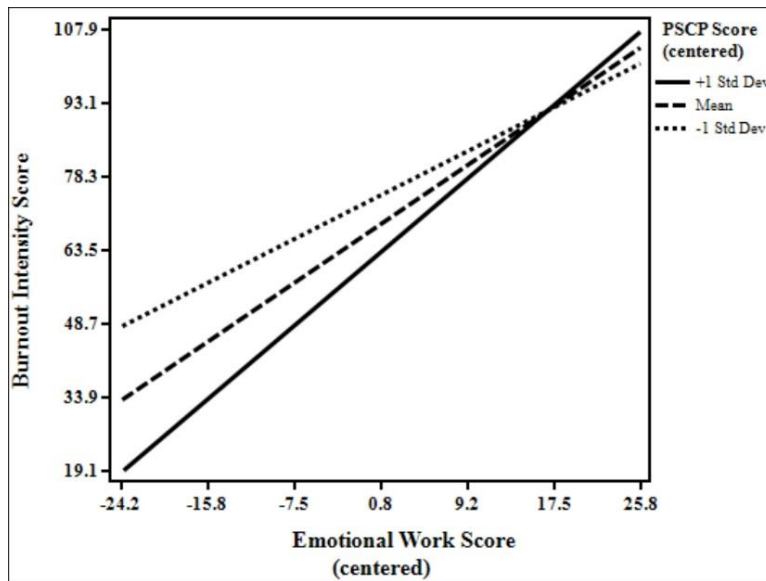


Figure 2. The Moderating Effect of Professional Self-Care Practices (PSCP) on Relationship between Emotional Work and Burnout Intensity

### Discussion

The relationship between professional self-care practices and emotional work were investigated to determine their relationships with occupational burnout among Australian psychology academics. Drawing on the framework of the Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) model, it was hypothesised that emotional work would be positively correlated with self-reported symptoms of occupational burnout frequency and intensity (Hypothesis 1), while professional self-care practices would be negatively correlated with burnout frequency and intensity (Hypothesis 2). It was further hypothesised that after controlling for demographic variables (age, gender, length of academic service and academic level) professional self-care practices would have a moderating effect on the relationship between emotional work and burnout frequency and burnout intensity (Hypothesis 3).

The results of the correlation analysis supported Hypothesis 1, showing a moderate positive association between emotional work and both burnout frequency and burnout intensity. These findings show that higher levels of emotional work are associated with academics reporting higher frequency and intensity of symptoms of burnout. Previous studies

have shown that school educators, academics and health professionals are more likely to perform high levels of emotional work due to the interpersonal relational nature of their professions, therefore more likely to experience psychological injury such as burnout (Miller et al., 2018; Pisaniello et al., 2012; Rehman et al., 2017; Tuxford & Bradley, 2015). Naring et al.'s (2012) and Tuxford and Bradley's (2015) findings revealed that school educators who performed high levels of emotional work while supporting students through their learning journey also reportedly recorded an increase in experiencing burnout symptoms. The current study focused on the level of emotional work performed by academics during student - academic engagement and while the correlation does not imply causation, it does however suggest that academics perform emotional work which involves making use of emotional behaviours and responses during student-academic interactions. These observations also appear to be evident in previous research studies which show that high levels of emotional work performed is directly proportional to the experience of occupational burnout (Naring et al., 2012; Sangganjanavanich & Balkin, 2013; Tuxford & Bradley, 2015).

These findings are consistent with the framework of the JD-R model, which states that when job demands (emotional work) increases the likelihood of experiencing occupational burnout also increases (Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). Researchers comment when professionals feel overwhelmed by job demands and are required to exert prolonged physiological or psychological effort to meet those demands it can negatively impact their overall wellbeing (Naring et al., 2012; Rehman et al., 2017; Sangganjanavanich & Balkin, 2013; Vysotskaya et al., 2015), and can also affect the students' learning experience (Bell et al., 2012).

The bivariate correlations between professional self-care practices and occupational burnout frequency and burnout intensity partially supported Hypothesis 2. Professional self-care practices were significant and negatively correlated with burnout frequency, but the



correlation with burnout intensity was non-significant. Although inconsistent, the results still show that a relationship exist between professional self-care practices and the experience of burnout symptoms based on the data of this sample. This suggests that academics who reported lower burnout symptoms may have had more opportunities or were more motivated to engage in professional self-care practices. The low number of participant responses for the intensity rating scale could also have been a contributing factor for the different results observed in burnout frequency and burnout intensity for Hypothesis 2. Participants were instructed to only respond to items on the intensity scale for the symptoms they experienced, and a high number of participants did not complete the intensity rating scale indicating that it did not apply to them.

Correlational analyses were performed to examine the relationship between demographic variables; age, gender, length of academic service and academic level, predictor variables and occupational burnout. Previous studies have shown that age, length of academic service and academic level were related to occupational burnout experienced among academics (Barkhuizen & Rothman, 2008; Bell et al., 2012; Khan et al., 2015; Peterson, 2011). The literature demonstrated that academics with less than 10 years' experience and who are younger than 40 years of age reportedly (Khan et al., 2015; Lim et al., 2011; Peterson, 2011; Purvanova & Muros, 2012) experienced higher levels of occupational burnout. However, the age ( $M = 44.80$ ) and length of academic service ( $M=13.34$ ) within this sample appear to be unrelated to how frequent or intense psychology academics experience burnout symptoms. The non-significant relationship between gender and burnout symptoms is also in line with Jacobson et al.'s (2001) findings of no significant differences in occupational burnout by gender among school educators. However, researchers agree previous studies' results on gender and occupational burnout have produced mixed results and are inconclusive (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Lackritz, 2004; Watts & Robertson, 2011).

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses (HMR) were used to assess the relationships between emotional work, professional self-care practices and occupational burnout frequency and burnout intensity, and further to test whether professional self-care practices moderated the relationship between emotional work and occupational burnout. The HMR findings revealed professional self-care practices and emotional work accounted for higher percent of variance in burnout frequency than burnout intensity score. Previous studies on emotional work and self-care practices within education and other health professions indicate that these predictor variables contribute to professionals experiencing burnout symptoms within these sectors (Myers et al., 2012; Naring et al., 2012; Pisaniello et al., 2012; Tuxford & Bradley, 2015). For example, Pisaniello et al. (2012) found that emotional work accounted for 56% of the variance in occupational burnout among nurses, whereas Naring et al. (2012) found that emotional work accounted for 18% of the variance in occupational burnout experienced among school educators and Myers et al.'s (2012) findings showed that self-care practices among clinical psychology graduates accounted for 43.8% of the variance in perceived occupational stress. Therefore, the results of the current study are in line with previous studies' findings suggesting that performing emotional work may increase an individual's likelihood of experiencing burnout symptoms (Naring et al., 2012; Pisaniello et al., 2012; Tuxford & Bradley, 2015) and that practicing professional self-care can potentially decrease or prevent a professional from experiencing occupational burnout (Myers et al., 2012).

The difference in variance accounted for in burnout frequency and burnout intensity may be further explained with Maslach and Jackson's (1981) finding that the variations in frequency and intensity are due to the individualised experience of burnout. When measuring burnout experiences, Maslach and Jackson (1981) found that having separate scales for both frequency and intensity allowed participants the opportunity to consider their experience in two-fold, so that participants were able to provide a more comprehensive response of their

experience of burnout symptoms. They further commented that evaluating burnout symptoms in this way also made consideration for additional factors such as personality differences or current circumstances that may be contributing to the unique way of how frequently or intensely individuals' experience burnout symptoms (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). However, after examining the burnout scores based on the original MBI measurement scale, researchers discovered an overlap and redundancy in the burnout frequency and burnout intensity scores (Maslach et al., 1996; Maslach et al., 2001). Based on these observations, researchers concluded that these findings offered very little insight into how the frequency and intensity of burnout symptoms contributes to an individual's overall experience of burnout (Maslach et al., 1996; Maslach et al., 2001). This led researchers to modify the original Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) measurement scale, and updated versions of the MBI scale have since been widely used in subsequent burnout studies to assess the individual's general experience of burnout symptoms within the workplace (Maslach et al., 1996; Maslach et al., 2001; Naring et al., 2012; Rehman et al., 2017; Sangganjanavich & Balkin, 2010).

Two separate HMR analyses were performed to test Hypothesis 3. The results of the analyses support Hypothesis 3, revealing that professional self-care practices had a moderating effect on the relationship between emotional work and both burnout frequency and burnout intensity scores. These findings, consistent with the JD-R model, indicate that job resources can physiologically and/or psychologically potentially reduce job demands thereby decreasing the possibility of an individual experiencing occupational burnout (Bakker et al., 2014; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). Professional self-care practices, an example of job resources, are supportive and motivational in their function and have the ability to help professionals build emotional resilience as well as encourage taking ownership of their overall wellbeing, both professionally and personally (Lee & Miller, 2013; Miller et al., 2018; Myers et al., 2012). Moreover, researchers found professionals who had

easy access to supportive professional resources were reportedly more motivated to find ways to practice professional self-care as a way to manage their increasing work demands (Bell et al., 2012; Dorociak et al., 2017; Lee & Miller, 2013; Miller et al., 2018). Miller et al.'s (2018) findings highlight social work academics who practiced self-care reportedly had higher levels of self-efficacy and effectively navigated occupational stressors, in addition, recorded significantly lower burnout symptoms. The findings of the current study's HMR analyses too suggest that a job resource such as professional self-care practices has the potential to act as a protective barrier and buffer the effects between emotional work performed and burnout symptoms experienced in both frequency and intensity among psychology academics (Bakker et al., 2014; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009).

The interaction plot graphs provide a visual illustration of the moderating effect of professional self-care practices on emotional work, burnout frequency (Figure 1) and burnout intensity (Figure 2). Both interaction plot graphs show that professional self-care practices appear to have a buffering effect against burnout frequency and burnout intensity at low levels of emotional work. However, as levels of emotional work performed increased, the protective function of professional self-care practices is reduced, and it appears to make no difference to the participants' experience of burnout symptoms. This may indicate that professional self-care practices on its own may not be enough to help protect psychology academics against the negative impact of high levels of emotional work. Furthermore, it may be that psychology academics might need to consider other coping strategies, interventions or resources to help moderate the effects between emotional work performed and burnout symptoms experienced. This is consistent with Dorociak et al.'s (2017) assertion that although professional self-care practices serve as a protective function against occupational burnout, the authors emphasise the importance of engaging in other self-care practices or

behaviours that promote healthier lifestyles as a way to positively influence professional and personal wellbeing.

Extensive research have been conducted on occupational burnout and emotional work within education and health sciences (Miller et al., 2018; Myers et al., 2012; Naring et al., 2012; Pisaniello et al., 2012; Tuxford & Bradley, 2015), however limited research exists on the level of emotional work performed by academics and how it possibly contributes to the growing rate of occupational burnout reported in academia (Aronsson et al., 2017; Barkhuizen & Rothman, 2008; Bell et al., 2011; Devonport et al., 2008; Watts & Robertson, 2011). The findings of this study, consistent with the framework of JD-R model, are significant and offer new insight on how job resources, such as professional self-care practices, can have a buffering effect in reducing the effects of job demands such as emotional work on occupational burnout among Australian psychology academics. Therefore, these findings contribute to the existing body of literature on burnout studies and further extend our understanding of occupational burnout in academia

### **Strengths and Limitations**

A strength of this current study is that it was adequately powered. This was also the first study to examine the professional self-care practices among psychology academics in Australia and produced significant results. The participants also ranged broadly in age, length of academic service and academic level.

Limitations of the study include the time of completion of the online survey. The online survey was completed during the first five weeks of the second semester. At this time of the year academics have already completed the first semester and have had a mid-year break, therefore their stress levels would presumably be different at the start of a semester. Burnout symptoms or stress levels may vary at different teaching period points, for example academics may experience higher levels of stress during the assessment period of the

semester when deadlines for assignments or examinations must be met. Another limitation is that this study only considered the student-academic dynamic and evaluated the levels of emotional work associated with managing this relationship. As a result, it only provided a partial perspective of the demands of the academic's diverse professional profile. Therefore, it is unclear whether other institutional responsibilities such as producing and publishing academic research, applying for and securing research grants, ongoing professional performance evaluations and peer collaborations also contributed to the levels of emotional work performed in this sample.

### **Future Recommendations**

Researchers should consider assessing academics' experience of emotional work performed and occupational burnout experience at different times during the semester to provide a broader picture of whether experiencing burnout symptoms are prominent at different teaching points during the semester. A combined quantitative and qualitative study is also recommended to explore psychology academics' perception of emotional work as well as determining whether different levels of input of emotional work are required when performing the various tasks associated with their professional profiles. This may help researchers gain a greater understanding on the functioning and composition of emotional work within higher education. In addition, it may also highlight and identify other predictors that contribute to the growing rate of occupational burnout experienced among psychology academics. Additionally, future studies could also include identifying other resources and strategies, whether professional or personal, that are beneficial in supporting psychology academics as they manage their job demands.

### **Conclusion**

Burnout in higher education has become a growing concern due to the changing landscape of academia (Khan et al., 2015; Watts & Robertson, 2011). Studies show that more academics

are feeling overwhelmed and finding it challenging to manage the demands of their diverse professional profiles (Bell et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2018; Watts & Robertson, 2011). Researchers have found the Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) model to be a user-friendly framework to evaluate the interaction between job demands and job resources and its role in reducing, increasing or managing occupational stressors (Bakker et al., 2014; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Previous studies on occupational burnout within education and academia show that due to the interpersonal relational nature of these professions, high levels of emotional work, an example of job demands, are performed, placing these professionals at risk of experiencing occupational burnout (Bell et al., 2012; Naring et al., 2012; Tuxford & Bradley, 2015). Limited information existed on the professional self-care practices or behaviours of academics, particularly those practiced by psychology academics, and their relationship with emotional work performed during student-academic engagement and occupational burnout.

The findings of this current study are significant as it highlights the protective function of professional self-care practices, a job resource, and its ability to moderate the relationship between emotional work performed and burnout symptoms experienced among Australian psychology academics. In addition, the findings illustrate that professional self-care practices' buffering function is most effective at lower levels of emotional work performed, however, the moderating effect of professional self-care practices decreases as levels of emotional work increase. This indicates that professional self-care practices are unable to solely protect the professional against high levels of emotional work, rather that other self-care practices or coping strategies, professional or personal, may be needed to help buffer the effects of high levels of emotional work performed. This study only focused on the student-academic relationship therefore it must be borne in mind that this is only one component of the academic's diverse professional profile. Further study is recommended to

determine how emotional work is performed across the academic's multiple professional roles, in addition, to also identify other predicting factors that may be contributing to high levels of emotional work performed by psychology academics. The present findings have provided a foundation and opportunity for future researchers to further investigate the various demands of psychology academics' professional profiles, the professional and personal coping strategies that are used to manage occupational stressors, and to determine whether or not these demands or resources predict or reduce the likelihood of occupational burnout experienced among this population.



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## SELF-CARE PRACTICES, EMOTIONAL WORK AND BURNOUT IN ACADEMIA

### **Appendices A , B, C, D, E, F, and G**

Are not available in this version of the thesis